



# **“LAST GENERATION THEOLOGY: ANTI-GOSPEL OR BIBLE TRUTH?”**

## **#1 - THE FINAL GENERATION: ISSUES**

**BY PASTOR STEPHEN BOHR**

### **The Issues**

#### **1975: *Perfection: The Impossible Possibility***

- ✓ Herbert Douglass
- ✓ Edward Heppenstall
- ✓ C. Mervyn Maxwell
- ✓ Hans LaRondelle

With minor variations, Herbert Douglas and C. Mervyn Maxwell were on the same page and Edward Heppenstall and Hans LaRondelle shared similar views.

At present there are **two main groups** of theologians in the Seventh-day Adventist Church when it comes to the Last Generation. Both groups have several points **in common**:

- ✓ Probation will close **before** the second **coming of Jesus**.
- ✓ **After probation** closes, this world will experience a **time of trouble** that no human pen can describe.
- ✓ God will have a **faithful remnant**—the 144,000—that will retain their allegiance to Jesus during this period.
- ✓ During this time, God’s faithful people will still **have their sinful human nature**.

- ✓ God will not remove the sinful nature of the Final Generation until **He transforms** this mortal, incorruptible body into the likeness of Christ's glorious body at the second coming.

However, the two groups **differ** on two fundamental and **related** questions:

- ✓ Will Jesus **continue to mediate** or **intercede** for the sins of the faithful remnant after probation closes?
- ✓ Will the faithful remnant live without sinning in act, word and thought during this period?

There are potential **dangers** lurking in both views:

- ✓ On one hand, those who believe in total victory over sin before the close of probation might fall into **perfectionism and fanaticism**, thinking highly of themselves and criticizing others for not reaching their 'high level' of spirituality.
- ✓ The danger on the other side is to take **sin lightly**, to **justify sin** because of **hereditary** and **cultivated** tendencies. The danger of this side is to teach that man's sinful human nature is **so powerful** that not even God's **omnipotent enabling grace** can give us total victory over it.

## **What, Who and When**

What do we mean by 'the Final Generation'? **Who** will belong to this group and **when** will they live?

**By definition** 'the Final Generation' refers to a **faithful remnant** that the book of **Revelation** refers to as the **144,000** that will **survive** the worst time of trouble in human history and **emerge victorious** (Revelation 15:2-4). At the end of the time of trouble they will translated to heaven from **among the living**.

## **The Relevance of Daniel 12:1**

**Daniel 12:1** is the key verse that will **provide the context** for our discussion in the next few days.

It is no coincidence that **Ellen White begins** the chapter on 'the time of trouble' in *The Great Controversy* by quoting this verse. The **entire chapter** is centered on this **one verse**. Let us read it and then consider in more detail each of the **eight** components.

## **Daniel 12:1**

*"At [1] **that time** [2] Michael shall [3] **stand up**, the **great prince** who [4] **stands watch** over the [5] sons of **your people**; and there shall be [6] a **time of trouble**, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people shall be [7] **delivered**, every one who is found [8] **written in the book**."*

- ✓ **'At that time'** (connects with verse 44)
- ✓ **'Michael'** (Jesus—Daniel 3:25, 28)
- ✓ **'Shall stand up'** (begins to reign over His kingdom because His kingdom is complete)
- ✓ **'Stands watch'** (He will be the protector of His people. He stands up to stand for)
- ✓ **'Your people'** (the 144,000 living saints)
- ✓ **'Time of trouble'** (the great tribulation after probation's close)
- ✓ **'Delivered'** (this must refer to the living because Michael must stand watch over them and they need to be delivered)
- ✓ **'In the book'** (this must refer to the judgment of the living because they will be alive at the end of the time of trouble)

### **#1: 'At that Time'**

The expression 'at that time' takes us back to **verse 44** of chapter 11 where **tidings** from the **east** and the **north** enrage the king of the north and turn him **against** the final generation. The final generation will face a **death decree** for being faithful to their convictions.

## **Daniel 11:44**

*"But news from the **east** [the sealing message] and the **north** [the loud cry] shall **trouble** [most versions translate 'alarm'] him; **therefore**, he shall go out with great fury to **destroy** and **annihilate** many."*

### **#2: 'Michael'**

The name means 'who is like God?' and it refers **to Jesus**. This is a significant fact because almost the entire world will say during this time, '*who is like the beast and who is able to make war with him?*' (Revelation 13:4) and Michael will answer, '*who is like God and who is able to make war with Him?*' We will have more to say about this point **later on**.

### #3: 'Stand Up'

What does the expression 'stand up' mean? The answer is that every time this expression appears in Daniel it refers to the moment when a king **begins to reign** over a kingdom (Daniel 8:22, 23, 25; 11:2, 3, 4, 7, 14, 20, 21; 12:1). This means that the standing up of Michael refers to the moment when Jesus **begins to reign** over His eschatological kingdom. However, He cannot begin to reign until the pre-Advent investigative judgment has revealed **who belongs** to His kingdom.

On the one hand, **Daniel 7:13, 14** and **Daniel 8:14** describe **October 22, 1844** when Jesus **moved** to the most holy place to **begin** the process that would reveal who, individually, belongs to His kingdom. On the other hand, the 'standing up' of Michael in **Daniel 12:1** describes the moment when the process of judging the living **ends**.

Thus, **Daniel 8:14** portrays **the beginning** of the process of investigative judgment that will reveal who belongs to the kingdom, and **Daniel 12:1** takes us to point when the process ends. When the process ends, Michael will 'stand up' or begin to reign over His kingdom because the number of **the subjects** His kingdom is complete.

While the **door of probation is open**, Jesus wears his **priestly robes** (Hebrews 8:1, 2; 4:14-16; Leviticus 8:1-9). However, when Jesus closes his ministration ('stands up') He will change his priestly garments to those of **a king** also known as **garments of vengeance**:

*"The nations are now getting angry, but when our High Priest has finished His work in the sanctuary, He will **stand up**, put on the **garments of vengeance**, and then the seven last **plagues will be poured out**." EW, p. 36*

*"Then I saw Jesus lay off His **priestly attire** and clothe Himself with His most **kingly robes**. Upon His head were **many crowns**, a crown within a crown. Surrounded by the angelic host, He left heaven." EW, p. 281*

### **Revelation 19:11, 12, 14**

If Jesus returns to the earth garbed **as a king**, He **must have changed** His garments before He returns.

*"Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. <sup>12</sup> His*

eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. . . And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses."

The Sabbath School Quarterly for the first quarter of 2020 explained the meaning of the word 'stand':

*"First, the verb 'stand' evokes the rise of kings to conquer and rule." Sabbath School Quarterly, First Quarter, 2020, Lesson #13, "From Dust to Stars", p. 101.*

Contrary to what many think, Jesus does not receive the kingdom from His Father at the second coming. Daniel 7:13, 14 explicitly teaches that Jesus goes to the Ancient of Days in heaven to receive the kingdom. When the investigation of both dead and living believers is complete, Jesus will take over the kingdom because the number of His subjects is complete:

*"[at the close of probation] Every case had been decided for life or death. While Jesus had been ministering in the sanctuary [before probation closes], the judgment had been going on for the righteous dead, and then for the righteous living. [When probation closed] Christ had received His kingdom, having made the atonement for His people and blotted out their sins. The subjects of the kingdom were made up. The marriage of the Lamb [the same as receiving the kingdom] was consummated. And the kingdom, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, was given to Jesus and the heirs of salvation, and Jesus was to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords [clear allusion to Revelation 19:16]." EW, p. 280*

In several of His parables, Jesus taught that He would receive the kingdom in heaven before His second coming. We will mention only three. At the beginning of the parable of the Minas Jesus said:

### Luke 19:12

*"A certain nobleman [Jesus] went into a far country [heaven] to receive for himself a kingdom [from the Father] and to return [the second coming]."*

In this parable, the nobleman represents Christ, the far country is heaven, and the return is His second coming. Clearly, Jesus receives the kingdom in heaven before He returns to earth to receive His people.

## **Matthew 22:1-14**

In the parable of the **wedding garment** (Matthew 22:1-14) while the gospel is being preached, the garments of all of those who have claimed Jesus Christ as Savior are examined to determine who is truly a subject of the kingdom. The examination of the garments **began in 1844** with the **dead** and will end with the **living**. It is absurd to think that God would examine the garments after all those who have claimed Jesus are in heaven. Would God return people to earth after taking them to heaven?

The **third example** is in **Luke 12:35, 36** where the wedding—the same as receiving the kingdom—takes place in heaven before Jesus returns:

### **Luke 12:35-37**

*"Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; <sup>36</sup> and you yourselves be like men **who wait** for their master, when he will **return from the wedding**, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately. <sup>37</sup> Blessed are those servants whom the master, **when he comes**, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them **sit down to eat**, and will come and serve them."*

We have three **sequential events** in this parable:

- ✓ The **wedding/receiving the kingdom** in heaven.
- ✓ The **return** of Jesus to the earth from the wedding.
- ✓ The wedding **reception** when we will sit down to eat with Jesus in heaven.

## **No Mediator when Probation Closes**

After quoting Daniel 12:1 in the **first paragraph** of the chapter on the time of trouble, **Ellen White wrote**:

*"When He **leaves the sanctuary**, darkness covers the inhabitants of the earth. In that fearful time **the righteous** must live in the sight of a **holy** God **without an intercessor**. The restraint which has been upon the wicked is **removed**, and Satan has **entire control** of the finally impenitent. God's **long-suffering has ended**. The world has rejected His mercy, despised His love, and trampled upon His law. The wicked have **passed the boundary** of their probation; the Spirit of God, persistently resisted, has been **at last withdrawn**. Unsheltered by divine grace, they have no protection from the wicked one. Satan will then plunge the*

inhabitants of the earth into **one great, final trouble**. As the angels of God cease to hold in check **the fierce winds** of human passion, **all the elements** of strife will be let loose. The whole world will be involved in ruin more terrible than that which came upon **Jerusalem of old**." Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 614

"Those who are **living** upon the earth when the intercession of Christ **shall cease** in the sanctuary above are to stand in the sight of a **holy** God **without a mediator**. Their robes must be **spotless**, their **characters** must be purified from sin by the blood of sprinkling. Through the **grace of God** and their **own diligent effort** they must be **conquerors** in the battle with evil." Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 424

Here are two other passages in Revelation that describe the close of probation:

### **Revelation 22:10-12**

"And he said to me, [1] "**Do not seal** the words of the prophecy of this book, [2] for the **time is at hand**. 11 He who is **unjust**, let him be unjust still; he who is **filthy**, let him be filthy still; he who is **righteous**, let him be righteous still; he who is **holy**, let him be holy still." <sup>12</sup> "And [3] behold, **I am coming quickly**, and My **reward is with Me**, to give to every one according to his work."

### **Revelation 15:5-8**

"After these things I looked, and behold, the **temple of the tabernacle** of the testimony in heaven **was opened**. <sup>6</sup> And **out of the temple** came the seven angels having the seven plagues, clothed in pure bright linen, and having their chests girded with golden bands. <sup>7</sup> Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls **full of the wrath** of God who lives forever and ever. <sup>8</sup> The temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power, and **no one was able to enter** the temple till the seven plagues of the seven angels **were completed**."

### **#4: 'Stands watch' (protector)**

The sense of the two uses of the word 'stand' in Daniel 12:1 is that Jesus stands **up** in order to stand **for** His people. Although the word 'stand' is the same, the **word that accompanies it** determines the meaning. What the text is telling us that when Jesus 'stands up' and **begins to rule** He will **stand for** the living subjects of His kingdom.

During the time of trouble, the king of the north will intend to destroy the living subjects of his kingdom so Jesus stands **for them**, that is to say, **defends them** (Isaiah 3:13-15; Psalm 109:31). He stands to defend:

- ✓ The Shepherd defends His **sheep**
- ✓ The Husband protects His **bride**
- ✓ The Sovereign protects His **vassal**
- ✓ The Head protects His **body**

Various versions translate the word '*stand*' with '*stand watch*' or '*guards*' or '*protects*'. At this point, the intercessor **no longer mediates** for the subjects of His kingdom but rather **defends them**. The **intercessor** has become the **defender**. Although God's people will have to stand without a mediator for sin, they will not stand without a defender. **Psalm 91** makes this clear!

### **#5: 'Over the sons of your people'**

**Who are** 'the sons of your people'? Daniel was a literal Jew so are his sons in Daniel 12:1 **literal Israelites**? The answer is **no**. The sons of Daniel's people in Daniel 12:1 are **Spiritual Israel** at the end of time.

Of course, the question that begs to be asked is this: What principle gives us the right to say that '**thy people**' [70 weeks are determined '**for thy people and thy city**'] refers to Daniel's **literal people** in Daniel 9:15, 16, 24 and 10:14 while 'thy people' in Daniel 12:1 refers to **spiritual Israel**?

Furthermore, why is the '**holy mountain**' in Daniel's prayer (Daniel 9:16, 20) a reference to **literal mount Zion** in the middle east while in Daniel 11:45 the same expression applies to a spiritual, **worldwide Mt. Zion** where God's global remnant is gathered?

We find the answer to these questions by understanding that while the Hebrew **theocracy** was in place, 'Israel' was **local and literal**. However, when the theocracy comes to an end in the **year 34 AD** we must understand the word 'Israel' in a **spiritual** and **global sense** (see John 4:23, 24; 2Corinthians 1:20; Galatians 3:16, 26-29; Romans 2:28, 29; Romans 9:6-8).

**Hebrews 8:8** helps us understand this hermeneutical principle. The text tells us that God promised to make a **new covenant** with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. A literal reading of this text would seem to indicate that the **new covenant** applies only to literal **Israel and Judah**. However, no Christian today



would say that the new covenant applies only to the literal Jews. Clearly, the words 'Judah' and 'Israel' apply **spiritually to all who believe in Jesus**. Jesus Himself referred to His sacrifice as the blood of the **new covenant** that He shed for many (Matthew 26:28).

This is how it works out. 'Thy people' (Daniel 9:15, 16, 20, 24; 10:14) changes from the literal to the spiritual Israel in **Daniel 12:1**. 'Holy Mountain' in Daniel 9:16, 20 changes from the literal Israel to the spiritual Israel (the church) in **Daniel 11:45**.

## **#6: 'Time of Trouble'**

The key verse to understand the time of trouble in Daniel 12:1 is in **Genesis 32:7**. In this chapter, Jacob was deeply troubled because he heard that his brother **Esau was coming** to kill him and his family. However, this was not his main concern. He still **remembered the sin** that he had committed against his father and brother twenty years before. He feared that his sin was so great that he could **not claim the covenant** protection of God.

Jacob cried out to God **for deliverance** from brother (Genesis 32:11). He then struggled all night with the **Angel of the Covenant**—Michael—and prevailed (see Hosea 12:4, 5). The Angel then **blessed** Jacob and gave him a **new name** that reflected his new character.

The context clearly indicates that this Angel was none less than **Jesus Christ**, the same person as **Michael** who appears in Daniel 12:1. Jacob called the place where he encountered the Angel, **Peniel** and explained the reason: "for I have seen God face to face and survived." The rage of Esau against his brother is fulfilled on a **broader scale** in Daniel 11:44-12:1. There, a global system symbolized by Esau will rise against the final generation represented by Jacob.

**Jeremiah 30:4-10** describes this 'time of Jacob's trouble' when God was about to deliver Judah from Babylonian captivity:

*"Now these are the words that the Lord spoke concerning **Israel and Judah**. 'For thus says the Lord: 'We have heard a voice of **trembling**, of fear, and not of peace. <sup>6</sup> Ask now, and see, whether a man is ever in **labor with child**? So why do I see every man with his hands on his loins like a woman in labor, and all faces turned pale? <sup>7</sup> Alas! For that day is great, so that **none is like it**; and it is the **time of Jacob's trouble**, but he shall be **saved out of it**.<sup>8</sup> 'For it shall come to pass in that*

day,' says the Lord of hosts, 'That I will break his yoke from your neck, and will burst your bonds; foreigners shall no more enslave them. <sup>9</sup> But they shall serve the Lord their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up for them. <sup>10</sup> 'Therefore do not fear, O My **servant Jacob**,' says the Lord, 'nor be dismayed, O **Israel**; for behold, I will save you from afar, and your seed from the land of their captivity. **Jacob** shall return, have **rest and be quiet**, and no one shall make him afraid."

What will the time of trouble **be like**?

"Men cannot discern the sentinel angels restraining the four winds that they shall not blow until the servants of God are sealed; but when God shall bid His angels loose the winds, there will be such a scene of **strife as no pen can picture**." Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 408

"As Jesus moved out of the most holy place, I heard the tinkling of the bells upon His garment; and as He left, a cloud of darkness covered the inhabitants of the earth. There was then **no mediator** between guilty man and an offended God. While Jesus had been standing between God and guilty man, a **restraint** was upon the people; but when He stepped out from between man and the Father, the **restraint was removed** and Satan had **entire control** of the finally impenitent." Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, p. 280

## **#7: 'Delivered'**

In order to understand **the deliverance** in Daniel 12:1 we must go back to chapters **3 and 6**. These two chapters have many points in common and they illustrate the **trials**, **faith** and **deliverance** of the final generation. Daniel 3 bears a close relationship with Daniel 12:1 and Revelation 13. In all three chapters, the **civil power** raises up **an image**, compels everyone **to worship** the image and whoever does not comply will be under a **death penalty**. In all three you have a **faithful remnant** who refuse to comply with command and as a result the faithful go through a **fiery time of trouble** at the end of which **Jesus, delivers** them out of it.

**The entire chapter three of Daniel revolves around the idea of jeopardy and deliverance.**

**Daniel 3:15**: The **king's challenge**:

"Now if you are ready at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, and you fall down and worship

*the image which I have made, good! But if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will you from my hands?"*

**Daniel 3:16-18:** The Hebrew worthies **respond to the king:**

*"Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If that is the case, **our God** whom we **serve** is able to **deliver** us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will **deliver** us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up."*

**Daniel 3:19:** The king was enraged and his face looked **like a demon**:

*"Then Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury, and the **expression on his face changed** toward Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. He spoke and commanded that they heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated."*

*"**Satanic attributes** made his countenance appear as the countenance of **a demon**." Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 4, p. 1169*

**Daniel 3:24, 25:** The **Son of God** came into the fiery furnace **to deliver**:

*"Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished; and he rose in haste and spoke, saying to his counselors, "Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?" They answered and said to the king, "True, O king." <sup>25</sup> "Look!" he answered, "I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is **like the Son of God**."*

**Daniel 3:28:** The Son of God **was the Angel**:

*"Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who sent **His Angel [Michael]** and **delivered** His servants who **trusted** in Him, and they have frustrated the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they should not **serve nor worship** any god except their own God!"*

**Daniel 3:29:** The king gives an **illegitimate decree**:

*"Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation, or language which speaks anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made an ash heap; because there is no other God who can **deliver** like this."*

## **In Daniel 6 the key word is once again 'DELIVER'**

**Daniel 6:5:** The conflict is regarding God's law versus the laws of men:

*"Then these men said, "We shall not find any charge against this Daniel unless we find it against him concerning the law of his God."*

**Daniel 6:6-9:** The king forbids the right to the free exercise of religion:

*"So these governors and satraps thronged before the king, and said thus to him: "King Darius, live forever! <sup>7</sup> All the governors of the kingdom, the administrators and satraps, the counselors and advisors, have consulted together to establish a royal statute and to make a firm decree, that whoever petitions any god or man for thirty days, except you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions. <sup>8</sup> Now, O king, establish the decree and sign the writing, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which does not alter." <sup>9</sup> Therefore King Darius signed the written decree."*

Daniel did not change his prayer habits. He was not politically correct (our religion should be personal but not private):

### **Daniel 6:10**

*"Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days."*

**Daniel 6:14-22:** The key word is 'DELIVER'

*"And the king, when he heard these words, was greatly displeased with himself, and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him; and he labored till the going down of the sun to deliver him. <sup>15</sup> Then these men approached the king, and said to the king, "Know, O king, that it is the law of the Medes and Persians that no decree or statute which the king establishes may be changed." <sup>16</sup> So the king gave the command, and they brought Daniel and cast him into the den of lions. But the king spoke, saying to Daniel, "Your God, whom you serve continually, He will deliver you." <sup>17</sup> Then a stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the signets of his lords, that the purpose concerning Daniel might not be changed. <sup>18</sup> Now the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; and no musicians were brought before him. Also his sleep*

went from him.<sup>19</sup> Then the king arose very early in the morning and went in haste to the den of lions.<sup>20</sup> And when he came to the den, he cried out with a lamenting voice to Daniel. The king spoke, saying to Daniel, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you **serve continually**, been able to **deliver** you from the lions?"<sup>21</sup> Then Daniel said to the king, "O king, live forever!"<sup>22</sup> My God sent **His angel** and shut the lions' mouths, so that they have not hurt me, because I was found **innocent before Him**; and also, O king, I have done **no wrong before you**."<sup>23</sup> Now the king was exceedingly glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no injury whatever was found on him, because he **believed [trusted] in his God**."

### **Daniel 6:25-27**

"Then King Darius wrote: To all peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied to you.<sup>26</sup> **I make a decree** that in every dominion of my kingdom men **must tremble and fear** before the God of Daniel for He is the living God, and steadfast forever; His kingdom is the one which shall not be destroyed, and His dominion shall endure to the end.<sup>27</sup> He **delivers** and rescues, and He works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, who has **delivered** Daniel from the power of the lions."

### **#8: 'Written in the book'**

This phrase proves that when probation closes the lives of the living saints have been examined and their **names retained** in the book of life. Michael will only deliver those whose names are retained in the book of life during the judgment of the living (see Philippians 4:3; Isaiah 4:3; Exodus 32:32, 33; Revelation 3:5; Psalm 69:28; Revelation 20:12, 15; 22:19).

When the time of trouble begins after probation closes, the names of the living saints are **already in the book** to be retained there forever. **Revelation 3:5** clearly states that God **can delete names** from the book of life. Ellen White described the predicament of the final generation:

"To outward appearance, there was no possibility of their **escape [Daniel 11:41]**. The **wicked** had already begun to triumph, crying out, "Why doesn't your God **deliver [Joel 2:32; Daniel 12:1]** you out of our hands? Why don't you go up and save your lives?" However, the saints heeded them not. **Like Jacob**, they were wrestling with God. The angels longed to **deliver [Joel 2:32; Daniel**

**12:1]** them but they must wait a little longer; the people of God must drink of the cup and be baptized with the baptism. The angels, faithful to their trust, continued their watch. God would not suffer His name to be reproached among **the heathen** [**Joel 2:17, 19; 3:11, 12, KJV**]. The time had nearly come when He was to manifest His mighty power and gloriously **deliver** [**Joel 2:32; Daniel 12:1**] His saints. For His name's glory He would **deliver** [**Joel 2:32; Daniel 12:1**] every one of those who had patiently waited for Him and whose names were **written in the book** [**Daniel 12:1**].” Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, pp. 283, 284

“Satan offers to men the kingdoms of the world if they will yield to him the supremacy. Many do this and sacrifice heaven. It is **better to die than to sin**; better to want than to defraud; better to hunger than to lie.” Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 495

“Those who would **rather die** than perform a wrong act are the only ones who will be found faithful.” Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 53



## **“LAST GENERATION THEOLOGY: ANTI-GOSPEL OR BIBLE TRUTH?”**

### **#2 - THOUGHTS ON THE HUMAN NATURE OF CHRIST BY PASTOR STEPHEN BOHR**

#### **My experience in Medellin**

On February 17-19, 2015 the Biblical Research Institute (BRI) of the General Conference held a symposium for all pastors, teachers and administrators in Colombia. Most of the members of BRI were there to present papers on various theological challenges that the church faced at the time and still faces.

I was invited to present two sessions on the human nature of Christ. Surprisingly, they never asked me beforehand what I believed about the subject.

At the symposium I presented the post-lapsarian view—that is, that at the incarnation Jesus took Adam’s sinful nature. I never expected the earthquake that ensued. There was a tumult because virtually all of the delegates to the symposium believed that Christ took the sinless human nature of Adam before the fall.

Things got so testy that one of the representatives of BRI, who for many years was the director of the Institute, calm the tension by explaining in the next plenary session that the view I presented was one of the two that are held by faithful Adventist scholars in the church. He said that my presentation was very well done.

He underlined that the church has taken no official position on the human nature of Christ and therefore both views are equally acceptable in the church.

He stated that that he wished that someone could have presented the **opposing view** for balance.

Several days later, another member of **BRI** who did not participate in the symposium but shared my view, called me and said:

*“We got a report this morning that you had an excellent presentation on the human nature of Christ in Medellin.”*

## **Required Reading**

A good share of what I am going to present comes from a book that every Seventh-day Adventist should study. The title of the book is *Touched with our Feelings: A Historical Survey of Adventist Thought on the Human Nature of Christ* by **Jean Zurcher**. In my opinion, this is the best book that has ever been written on the subject of the human nature of Christ. It is a historical/theological study that traces how the Seventh-day Adventist Church embraced a new Christology in the decade of the 1950's. Here are some details about the book:

- ✓ Before Jean Zurcher died, he was the director of the Biblical Research Institute of the **Euro-Africa Division** and also **Division secretary**.
- ✓ He served as a **theology professor** in several **SDA universities**.
- ✓ His book was published by the **Review and Herald** in **1999** which means that his book was **not deemed heretical**.
- ✓ Dr. Zurcher also wrote *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, a book on anthropology that was **acclaimed internationally** in the non-Adventist academic world.

## **Linked with other Doctrines**

The doctrine of the nature of Christ cannot be studied **in isolation** from other doctrines. It has a direct impact on our concept of Soteriology and Eschatology.

## **Important Questions**

- ✓ **What do we mean** by a sinful and a sinless human nature?
- ✓ **Is it a sin** to have a sinful nature or is sin **allowing the sinful nature** to express itself in sinful acts, thoughts and words?
- ✓ In what way does the **Roman Catholic view** of original sin differ from the Adventist concept of inheriting a **sinful human nature**?



- ✓ We all agree that Jesus is 100% man and 100% God. However, the critical question is this: **What kind of humanity** did Jesus take when He came to this earth? Did he take the human nature of Adam **before or after** the fall? Or is it possible that there is a **third option**?
- ✓ What did Ellen White mean when she wrote that Jesus had **no 'evil propensities'** toward sin?
- ✓ Is it possible to gain a **total victory** over sin while living in a sinful nature?
- ✓ Would it be fair for Jesus to expect that we **follow His example** if He had a different human nature from ours?
- ✓ Will God have an **end time generation** that will totally overcome sinful actions, words and thoughts in sinful flesh?
- ✓ When will Jesus **remove** from His people their sinful natures?
- ✓ Will God's people **continue sinning** in acts, words and thoughts after the close of probation?
- ✓ Will we be able to **send our sins** to the heavenly sanctuary after the close of human Probation?
- ✓ Is there **biblical corroboration** that confirms that Ellen White was right when she said that God's people will have to live in the time of trouble without a mediator?
- ✓ Will the last generation **be different** than any previous generation?

## **The Non-negotiables**

- ✓ While He was on earth, Jesus was **100% God** and **100% man** but he **never used** His own divine nature to overcome temptation. He always depended on the **divine power** of His Father.
- ✓ It **is possible** for us to overcome as Jesus overcame if we meet the same conditions. It is possible to follow **His example**.
- ✓ The temptations of Jesus were **far greater** than the ones that Adam faced. Adam was not asked to turn stones into bread, to bear the sins of the world, neither was he pursued by Satan every minute of every day. The temptations of Jesus were **infinitely greater** than the ones we face. He had no advantage over us.
- ✓ Jesus **never cultivated** evil propensities toward sin. He never **felt inclined** to sin. In fact, he **recoiled** from temptation the instant it came:

*“Be careful, **exceedingly careful** as to how you dwell upon the **human nature** of Christ. Do not set Him before the people as a man with the **propensities of sin**. He is the second Adam. The first Adam was created a pure, sinless being, without a taint of sin upon him; he was in the image of God. He could fall, and he did fall through transgressing. Because of sin his posterity was born with **inherent propensities of disobedience**. But Jesus Christ was the only begotten Son of God. He took upon Himself human nature, and was tempted in all points as human nature is tempted. He could have sinned; He could have fallen, but not for one moment was there in Him an **evil propensity**. He was assailed with temptations in the wilderness, as Adam was assailed with temptations in Eden.” Ellen G. White, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1128*

**Synonyms of propensity:** ‘Leaning, tendency, inclination, bias toward, bent, proclivity’.

## **Dangers in Both Views**

There are **dangers** to both views:

On one hand, those who believe in total victory over sin before the close of probation are always in danger of falling into the deadly errors of **perfectionism and fanaticism**, thinking highly of themselves and criticizing others for not reaching their ‘high level’ of spirituality.

The danger on the other side is to take **sin lightly**, to **justify sin** because of **hereditary** and **cultivated** tendencies. The danger of this side is to teach that man’s sinful human nature is **so powerful** that not **even** God’s omnipotent enabling grace can give us total victory over it.

Those who say that it is not possible to totally overcome sin before the close of probation are not really saying that the **sinful human nature is weak** but rather that God is **not powerful enough** to help us overcome it. They are saying, perhaps inadvertently, that our sinful flesh is more powerful than the omnipotent enabling power of God. It is time to **quit fighting** about Christ’s human nature and start living like He lived.

Those who are **most holy** in the sight of God are those who **feel the most sinful** because they are beholding the **perfect beauty** of Christ and how much **sin cost** Him in Gethsemane and on the cross. Like **Isaiah**, when they behold the holiness of God they say, ‘I am undone’. Like **Peter**, they say to Jesus ‘depart

from me for I am a sinful man', like **Paul** they say 'who shall deliver me from this body of death', like **Daniel**, they say 'we have sinned'.

## **The Stark Reality**

Let us not attempt to **defend the indefensible** by saying that the Adventist Church has always believed that Jesus took the nature of Adam before the fall. It is **undeniable fact** that the Seventh-day Adventist Church **changed** its Christology in the middle of the twentieth century from a **post-lapsarian** to a **pre-lapsarian** view. Most scholars in our theological schools and seminaries have adopted this **new Christology**.

## **Jones, Waggoner and Prescott**

**Jones and Waggoner** of 1888 fame, taught that Jesus took human nature after the fall. Waggoner suggested that we look closely at the **genealogy of Jesus** in order to determine the human nature He received. Among His ancestors were **Abraham** the liar, **David** the adulterer and murderer and **Manasseh** the idolater (Romans 1:3; Matthew 1). Jesus had the same sinful nature of His ancestors but He never yielded like His ancestors did.

**Jones** wrote that Jesus possessed the **passions and tendencies** of sinful flesh but **never participated** in them. It is vital to understand the difference between **having** the passions and tendencies and **yielding** to them.

### **A. T. Jones:**

*"conversion. . . does not put new flesh upon an old spirit; but a **new spirit within the old flesh**. It does not propose to bring new flesh to the old mind; but a **new mind to the old flesh**. Deliverance and victory are not gained by having the human nature taken away; but by receiving the **divine nature to subdue** and have dominion over the human. . . The Scripture does not say 'Be ye transformed by the renewing of **your flesh**'; but it does say, 'Be ye transformed by the renewing of **your mind**' (Romans 12:2). We shall be **translated** by the renewing of our flesh; but we must be **transformed** by the renewing of our minds." Waggoner, *Lessons on Faith*, pp. 90-92*

*"The flesh of Jesus Christ was **our flesh**, and in it was all that is **in our flesh**—all the **tendencies** to sin that are **in our flesh** were in His flesh, **drawing upon Him** to get Him to consent to sin." A. T. Jones, *General Conference Bulletin*, 1895, p. 328.*

Some have suggested that Ellen White contradicted herself on this matter. On the one hand she wrote that Jesus does not have our passions and on the other she seems to say just the opposite. However, she is actually contrasting yielding to the human passions with standing firm against them:

*“He was a mighty petitioner, **not possessing the passions of our human, fallen natures**, but compassed with **like infirmities**, tempted in all points even **as we are**. Jesus endured agony which required **help and support** from His Father.”*  
Ellen G. White, *God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 167

*“Though He **had all the strength of passion of humanity**, never did He **yield** to temptation to do one single act which was not pure and elevating and ennobling.”*  
Ellen G. White, *In Heavenly Places*, p. 155

**W. W. Prescott**, whose view Ellen White repeatedly and enthusiastically approved of and endorsed, said:

*“Although Jesus Christ **took sinful flesh**—flesh **in which we sin**—He took that flesh, and emptying Himself and receiving the fullness of God Himself, God was able to **keep Him from sinning in that sinful flesh**. So that although He was manifested in sinful flesh, God, by His Spirit and power dwelling in Him **kept Him from sinning in that sinful flesh**.”* W. W. Prescott, *General Conference Bulletin*, 1895, p. 319

*“Jesus Christ had **exactly the same flesh** that we bear—**flesh of sin**, flesh in which we sin, but in which **He did not sin**, in which He bore our sins.”* W. W. Prescott, *General Conference Bulletin*, 1895, p. 319

*“Jesus Christ did not take the likeness of man just as Adam was **before he fell**, but He came down to the **very plane** to which man had fallen. . . And took upon Himself **the flesh of sin**.”* W. W. Prescott, *General Conference Bulletin*, 1895, p. 319

*“it was **in sinful flesh** that He was tempted, not the flesh in which Adam fell.”* W. W. Prescott, *General Conference Bulletin*, 1895, p. 319

**On October 31, 1895** Ellen White **heard Prescott** preach a sermon on the Word made flesh and enthusiastically **endorsed its content**.

Catholics and many protestants teach the doctrine of **original sin**. The basic idea is that we are **born sinners** because Adam bequeathed to us the guilt of his sin. In other words, we are guilty simply because, as descendants of Adam,

we inherit Adam's sinful flesh. According to this view, if Jesus had been born with the same sinful nature as the rest of humanity He would have been sinful by birth. In such a case Jesus would have **needed a savior**.

There is no doubt that everyone in this world has been born with a sinful human nature. That is to say, the **pull of sin** (singular) dwells in each descendant of Adam and the power of sin **entices us** to commit sins (plural).

The apostle Paul describes this sinful nature with expressions such as '*desires of the flesh*' '*the law of sin in my members that wars against the law of my mind*', '*the desires of our sinful nature*'.

These expressions do not refer to **specific sinful acts** but rather to our **internal sinful inclinations and tendencies** that entice us to commit sins. However, these internal inclinations toward disobedience **only become sinful** when we yield to the desires of our sinful nature.

**James 1:13-15** explains how our **sinful nature** entices us to commit actual sins:

*"Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. <sup>14</sup> But each one is tempted when he is **drawn away by his own desires and enticed**. <sup>15</sup> Then, when **desire** has conceived, it gives birth to **sin**; and sin, when it is **full-grown**, brings forth death."*

Jesus was never drawn away by his own desires. He had the desires and enticements but the instant the temptation came to yield to those desires and enticements, he rejected them. Jesus overcame the temptation before it was conceived!

## **What is Sin?**

We sin when **we choose** to **act, speak** or **think** contrary to the revealed will of God. Sin is to **allow our fallen human nature** to act in opposition to the will of God. If sin is **not a matter of nature** but rather **of choice**, then Jesus could have inherited our sinful human nature **without becoming a sinner**.

Jesus remained sinless because the moment the temptation came, he chose to obey God and **never allowed** His sinful human nature to **control His actions**. His inheritance was like ours but His **choices were different**.

Ellen White confirmed this point of view:

*"There are **thoughts and feelings** suggested and aroused by Satan that annoy even the best of men; but **if they are not cherished**, if they are **repulsed as hateful**, the **soul is not contaminated** with guilt, and no other is defiled by their influence." Ellen G. White, *The Review and Herald*, Mar 27, 1888.*

*"By faith and prayer **all** may meet the requirements of the gospel. No man can be **forced to transgress**. **His own consent** must be first gained; the **soul must purpose the sinful act**, before passion can dominate over reason, or iniquity triumph over conscience. Temptation, however strong, is **never an excuse for sin**." Ellen G. White, *Messages to Young People*, p. 67*

*"The human family have **all the help that Christ had** in their conflicts with Satan. They need not be overcome. They may be **more than conquerors** through Him who has loved them and given His life for them. "Ye are bought with a price" (1 Corinthians 6:20). And what a price! The Son of God in His humanity wrestled with the very **same fierce, apparently overwhelming temptations** that assail men—temptations to indulgence of appetite, to presumptuous venturing where God has not led them, and to the worship of the god of this world, to sacrifice an eternity of bliss for the fascinating pleasures of this life. Everyone will be tempted, but the Word declares that we shall **not be tempted above our ability to bear**." Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, vol. 1, p. 95*

*"Though He had all the strength of **passion of humanity**, never did He **yield** to temptation to do one single act which was not pure and elevating and ennobling." *Signs of the Times*, November 21, 1892*

We do **not inherit guilt** from our ancestors because we receive a sinful nature from them. We are only guilty when we **personally choose** to respond to the pleadings of our sinful nature.

### **Deuteronomy 24:16**

*"Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor shall children be put to death for their fathers; a person shall be put to death **for his own sin**."*

## **Ezekiel 18:20**

*"The soul who sins shall die. The **son shall not bear** the guilt of the father, nor the **father bear** the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be **upon himself**, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be **upon himself**."*

*"Our **ancestors** have bequeathed to us **customs and appetites** which are filling the world with disease. The sins of the parents, through perverted appetite, are with fearful power visited upon the children to the third and fourth generations. The bad eating of many generations, the gluttonous and self-indulgent habits of the people, are filling our poorhouses, our prisons, and our insane asylums. Intemperance in drinking tea and coffee, wine, beer, rum, and brandy, and the use of tobacco, opium, and other narcotics, has resulted in great mental and physical degeneracy, and this degeneracy is constantly increasing." Ellen G. White, The Review and Herald, July 29, 1884.*

*"It is inevitable that children should suffer from **the consequences** of parental wrongdoing, but they are **not punished for the parents' guilt**, except as they **participate in their sins**. It is usually the case, however, that children walk in the steps of their parents. By inheritance and example, the sons **become partakers of the father's sin**. Wrong tendencies, perverted appetites, and debased morals, as well as physical disease and degeneracy, are \_\_\_ from father to son, to the third and fourth generation. This fearful truth should have a solemn power to restrain men from following a course of sin." Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 306*

## **Bible Readings for the Home Circle before 1949**

From the **1947** edition of *Bible Readings for the Home* and also in all editions going **back to 1914**.

### **Section 4 chapter 39: "A Sinless Life", question #6:**

***How fully did Christ share our common humanity?***

*"Wherefore in **all things** it behooved Him to be made **like unto His brethren**, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." Verse 17.*

***NOTE:*** In His humanity Christ partook of **our sinful, fallen nature**. If not, then He was not 'made like unto His brethren,' was not 'in all points tempted like as we are,' did not overcome **as we** have to overcome, and is not, therefore, the

**complete and perfect Savior** man needs and must have to be saved. The idea that Christ was born of an immaculate or sinless mother **inherited no tendencies to sin**, and for this reason did not sin, **removes Him** from the realm of a fallen world, and from the very place where help is needed. On His human side, Christ inherited just what **every child of Adam inherits**— a **sinful nature**. On the divine side, from His very conception He was begotten and born of the Spirit. And all this was done to place mankind on vantage-ground, and to demonstrate that in the same way everyone who is "born of the Spirit" may gain like victories over sin **in his own sinful flesh**. Thus each, one is to overcome **as Christ overcame**. Rev. 3:21. Without this birth there can be no victory over temptation, and no salvation from sin. John 3: 3-7."

#### **Section 4 chapter 39: "A Sinless Life", questions #6, 7, 8:**

##### **7. Where did God, in Christ, condemn sin, and gain the victory for us over temptation and sin?**

"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." Romans 8:3.

Note: God, in Christ, condemned sin, not by pronouncing against it merely as a judge sitting on the judgment-seat, but by coming and living in the flesh, in the **likeness of sinful flesh**, and **yet without sinning**. In Christ, He demonstrated that **it is possible**, by His grace and power, to resist temptation, overcome sin, and live a **sinless life in the flesh**.

**8.** By whose power did Christ live the perfect life? "I can of Mine own self do nothing." John 5:30. "The words that I speak unto you I speak not of Myself: but the Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works." John 14: 10.

Note: In His humanity Christ was as dependent upon divine power to do the works of God as is any man to do the same thing. He employed no means to live a holy life that are **not available to every human being**. Through Him, **every one** may have God dwelling in him and working in him 'to will and to do of His good pleasure.' 1 John 4:15; Philippians 2: 13."

#### **A Gargantuan Christological Change**

In 1949 the **Review and Herald** asked professor **D. E. Rebok** from the **Adventist Seminary** in Washington, DC to review the text of *Bible Readings for*



the Home in order to publish a new edition. The 1949 edition **took out the note** that stated that Jesus took our sinful human nature.

**Ralph Larsen** in his book *The Word Made Flesh*, documented how **Ellen White** repeatedly wrote that Jesus took our **sinful nature** and provides multiple quotations of **Adventist authors before 1949** who wrote the same. It is indeed surprising that after the church had existed for **90 years**, suddenly a change was made.

**Froom** commented on the change:

*"Coming upon this unfortunate note on page 174, in the study about the 'Sinless Life,' he "[**Rebok**] recognized that this was **not true**. . . So the **inaccurate** note was deleted, and has **remained out** in all subsequent printings." Leroy Froom, *Movement of Destiny*, p. 428*

Elder Froom and others wanted the **evangelicals** to recognize the Seventh-day Adventist Church as a **bona fide** mainstream denomination and in order to accomplish this they needed to **discard de idea** that Christ took the sinful nature of Adam albeit without committing sin.

According to Donald Grey Barnhouse (*'Are Seventh-day Adventists Christians?' Eternity, September 1956, p. 75*) Adventist representatives told Walter Martin that:

*'they had among their number certain members of their '**lunatic fringe**, even as there are similar **wild-eyed irresponsible** in every field of fundamental Christianity.'*

Between **1955 and 1956**, **eighteen meetings** took place between Evangelical and Seventh-day Adventist leaders. Our leaders assured the evangelicals that:

*'the majority of the denomination has always held [the humanity assumed by Christ] to be sinless, holy, and perfect despite the fact that **certain of their writers** have occasionally gotten into print with contrary views completely **repugnant** to the church at large.'* Donald Grey Barnhouse, *'Are Seventh-day Adventists Christians?' Eternity, September 1956, p. 75*)

In the book *Questions on Doctrine* Leroy Froom included **only quotations** that supported **his point of view** and ignored the **overwhelming witness** of those who contradicted it. Many of his supporting quotations he took **out of their**

**legitimate context**, quoted **only the portions** that seemed to sustain his point of view and added **subtitles** that misled the Evangelicals.

**R. A. Anderson** was one of those who agreed with the change in Seventh-day Adventist Christology:

*“our Lord partook of our limited human nature, but not our corrupt, carnal nature with **all its propensities to sin** and lust. In Him was no sin, either inherited or cultivated, as is common to all the **natural descendants of Adam**.”* R. A. Anderson, *Ministry Magazine*, September, 1956.

*“When the incarnate God broke into human history and became one with the race, it is our understanding that He possessed the sinlessness of the nature with which **Adam was created in Eden**. The **environment** in which Jesus lived, however, was tragically different from that which Adam knew before the fall.”* R. A. Anderson, *Ministry Magazine*, September, 1956.

Notably, *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, prepared by over **40 Adventist theologians** from **1953 to 1957** contains **no vestige** of the new Christology in spite of the fact that it was published in the **same year** that *Questions on Doctrine* was published. In **1958** the first two volumes of Ellen White’s *Selected Messages* were published and they did **not contain even a hint** of the new Christology.

According to **Roman Catholic theology**, babies are born **guilty of original sin** and therefore they must be baptized as infants to remove the **macula** as quickly as possible.

The biblical and Spirit of prophecy view is different. We believe that we inherit the **consequences** of Adam’s sin, that is, his sinful human nature; but God does not **hold us guilty** until we **choose** to sin. Traditional Adventist theology teaches that we inherit a **sinful human nature** that is **slanted** toward sin and for this reason God makes us participants of the **divine nature** in order to **overcome sin in sinful flesh**. Sadly, the more we yield to the pull of our sinful human nature, the stronger **that the sinful nature becomes**. In other words, the nature that **we feed** becomes strong while the nature **we starve** becomes weak. The sinful nature of Jesus was starved to death.

## **The Bible on the Human Nature of Christ**

### **Romans 1:3, 4: Jesus inherited the nature of His ancestors:**

*"Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God <sup>2</sup> which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, <sup>3</sup> concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the **seed of David** according to **the flesh**."*

### **John 1:14: Jesus assumed our flesh:**

*"And the Word **became flesh** and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."*

### **Romans 8:1-3**

*"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do **not walk according to the flesh**, but according to the Spirit. <sup>2</sup> For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. <sup>3</sup> For what the law could not do in that it was weak **through the flesh**, God did by sending His Own Son in the **likeness of sinful flesh**, on account of sin: He **condemned sin in the flesh**, <sup>4</sup> that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who **do not walk** according **to the flesh** but according to the Spirit."*

The word *homoiomati* ('likeness') appears **three times** in the New Testament (Romans 8:3; Hebrews 2:17; Philippians 2:7) and each time the meaning has to do with **similarity, not difference**. Clearly, Jesus was not identical to us. In what way was he different? Was He different because he took Adam's nature before the fall rather than after?

The book of Hebrews tells us that Jesus was made in **all things** like **His brethren** except for sin (which means transgression of the law). In other words, Jesus had **sinful flesh like us** but he was **not altogether like us** because he never was **inclined** or had an **evil propensity** to sin. He was so much under the control of the **Holy Spirit** that He **recoiled** from evil. His human nature certainly was not like Adam before the fall because in that case He would not have been similar but different.

*"He is a brother in our infirmities, "in all points tempted like as we are;" but as the sinless one His **nature recoiled from evil**; He endured struggles and torture of soul in a world of sin. His humanity made prayer a necessity and a privilege. He*

*found comfort and joy in communion with His Father. And if the Savior of men, the Son of God, felt the need of prayer, how much more should feeble, sinful mortals feel the necessity of fervent, constant prayer." Ellen G. White, Steps To Christ, pp. 93, 94*

### **Hebrews 2:11-18 Is every person born into the world a 'brother' of Jesus?**

*"For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren,<sup>12</sup> saying: "I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You."<sup>13</sup> And again: "I will put My trust in Him." And again: "Here am I and the children whom God has given Me."<sup>14</sup> Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,<sup>15</sup> and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.<sup>16</sup> For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, in all things He had to be made like [homoiomati] His brethren [except sin, Hebrews 4:15] that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.<sup>18</sup> For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted."*

### **Hebrews 4:15**

Jesus was tempted in all points such as we are, not only as Adam was:

*"For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin."*

### **Galatians 4:4, 5**

Jesus was born of a woman as we are:

*"But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law,<sup>5</sup> to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons."*

### **Philippians 2:6-8**

Paul tells us that Jesus came 'like' men. Does the word 'like' imply similarity of difference? The context clearly indicates that the word indicates 'similarity':

*Jesus 'made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the **likeness** [homoiomati] of men. <sup>8</sup> And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.'*

### **James 1:14, 15**

Was Jesus tempted **from inside** as we are? Yes, but he never allowed His sinful human nature to **express itself**. Jesus did not allow sin to conceive.

*"Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. <sup>14</sup> But each one is tempted when he is **drawn away** by **his own desires and enticed**. <sup>15</sup> Then, when desire has **conceived**, it gives **birth to sin**; and **sin**, when it is full-grown, brings forth **death**."*

### **Psalms 51:5**

*"Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me."*

### **1 John 3:4, KJV**

Sin is transgression of the law. We sin when we allow our sinful human nature to express itself in **acts of sin**:

*"Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law."*

Ellen White explained the meaning of the word 'sin':

*"The **only definition** of sin given in God's Word, is transgression of the law."*  
*General Conference Bulletin, March 2, 1897*

## **Evil Propensities?**

What are 'evil propensities'? They are inclinations to sin that have been strengthened by **sinful indulgence**. The **propensity itself** is not sinful until we **give in to the propensity** and as we give in to the propensity it becomes ever stronger. The **1828 edition** of Webster's Dictionary defines propensity as

*'bent of mind, natural or acquired; inclination; in a moral sense; disposition to anything good or evil, particularly to evil; as a propensity to sin; the corrupt propensity of the will.'*

Ellen White explained that Jesus took our **fallen nature** but not corrupted by sin because He **never allowed the propensity** to express itself in sinful words, acts or thoughts.

*“Here the test to Christ was far greater than that of Adam and Eve, for Christ took our nature, **fallen but not corrupted**, and would **not be corrupted unless** He received the words of Satan in the place of the words of God.” Ellen G. White, Manuscript 57, 1890*

Ellen White repeatedly underlined that Jesus took **Adam’s fallen nature** but that nature **never expressed itself** in sinful acts. The sinful human nature was ever under the **control of the Holy Spirit**. Jesus **never toyed** with temptation. He **never asked Himself** ‘should I do it or should I not?’ The **very moment** the temptation came, the Holy Spirit led Him to **instantly reject it**. In this way Jesus **condemned sin in sinful flesh**.

A propensity is a **tendency**, an **inclination** to sin. If the propensity is under control by the Holy Spirit, the propensity is **not sinful**. Inherent propensities to sin become ‘evil propensities’ only after **giving in to temptation** and the more we give in, the stronger the sinful propensity becomes.

Ellen White wrote about us:

*“We need not retain one **sinful** propensity. . . As we partake of the divine nature, hereditary and cultivated **tendencies to wrong** are cut away from the character, and we are made a living power for good. Ever learning of the divine Teacher, daily partaking of His nature, we cooperate with God in overcoming Satan’s temptations.” Ellen G. White, That I May Know Him, p. 95*

## **Ellen G. White: What Kind of Nature?**

If the belief that Christ took the nature of man in its fallen condition makes one part of a ‘**lunatic fringe**’, then Ellen White belonged to that fringe. This would be a **serious accusation** against God’s servant. Let us examine several statements where Ellen White defines the nature that Jesus came with.

*“In taking upon Himself man’s nature in its **fallen condition**, Christ did not in the least **participate in its sin**. . . He was touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and was in all points tempted like as we are. And yet He **knew no sin**. . . We should*

have no misgivings in regard to the **perfect sinlessness** of the human nature of Christ." Ellen G. White, *Selected Message*, vol. 1, p. 256

This statement makes it abundantly clear that Jesus was sinless, not because he did not have a sinful human nature but because the fallen human nature never sinned.

"After the great disappointment there were few who set themselves to seek the Word with all their heart. But some souls would not settle down in discouragement and deny that the Lord had led them. To these the truth was opened point by point, and entwined with their most hallowed recollections and sympathies. The searchers after truth felt that the **identification of Christ with their nature and interest was complete**." Ellen G. White, *Selected Message*, vol. 2, pp. 109, 110

"Satan again rejoiced with his angels that he could, by causing man's fall, pull down the Son of God from His exalted position. He told his angels that when Jesus should take **fallen man's nature**, he could overpower Him and hinder the accomplishment of the plan of salvation." Ellen G. White, *Early Writings* p. 152

"Jesus also told them that they would have a part to act, to be with Him and at different times strengthen Him; that He would **take man's fallen nature**, and His strength would not be even equal with theirs. . ." Ellen G. White, *Early Writings* p. 150

"The great work of redemption could be carried out only by the Redeemer taking the place of **fallen Adam**. With the sins of the world laid upon Him, He would go over the ground **where Adam stumbled**. He would bear a test infinitely more severe than that which **Adam failed to endure**. He would overcome on man's account, and conquer the tempter, that, through His obedience, His purity of character and steadfast integrity, His righteousness might be imputed to man, that, through His name, man might overcome the foe on his own account." Ellen G. White, *Confrontation*, pp. 17, 18

"It would have been an almost infinite humiliation for the Son of God to **take man's nature**, even when Adam stood in his innocence in Eden. **But** Jesus accepted humanity when the race had been weakened by four thousand years of sin. Like every child of Adam, He accepted the results of the working of **the great law of heredity**. What these results were is shown in the history of His **earthly ancestors**. He came with **such a heredity** to share **our** sorrows and temptations,

and to **give us the example** of a sinless life." Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* p. 48

"Adam was tempted by the enemy, and he fell. It was **not indwelling sin** which caused him to yield; for God made him pure and upright, in His own image. He was as faultless as the angels before the throne. There were in him **no corrupt principles**, no tendencies to evil. **But** when Christ came to meet the temptations of Satan, He bore 'the likeness of **sinful flesh**.' Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, October 17, 1900

"In **our humanity**, Christ was to redeem **Adam's failure**. **But** when Adam was assailed by the tempter, **none of the effects of sin** were upon him. He stood in the strength of **perfect manhood**, possessing the **full vigor** of mind and body. He was surrounded with the glories of Eden, and was in daily communion with heavenly beings. It was **not thus with Jesus** when He entered the wilderness to cope with Satan. For four thousand years the race had been decreasing in **physical** strength, in **mental** power, and in **moral** worth; and Christ took upon Him the infirmities of **degenerate humanity**. **Only thus** could He rescue man from the **lowest depths** of his **degradation**.

Many claim that it was impossible for Christ to be overcome by temptation. Then He could not have been placed in **Adam's position**; He could not have gained the victory that **Adam failed to gain**. If we have in any sense a more trying conflict than had Christ, then He would not be able to succor us. But our Savior took humanity, with **all its liabilities**. He took the nature of man, with the **possibility of yielding** to temptation. We have nothing to bear which **He has not endured**." Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* p. 117

"In Christ were united the divine and the human--the Creator and the creature. The nature of God, whose law had been transgressed, and **the nature of Adam, the transgressor**, meet in Jesus--the Son of God, and the Son of man." Ellen G. White, *Lift Him Up*, p. 345

"Think of Christ's humiliation. **He took** upon himself **fallen**, suffering human nature, **degraded and defiled** by sin. He took our sorrows, bearing our grief and shame. He endured **all the temptations** wherewith **man** is beset." Ellen G. White, *The Youth's Instructor*, December 20, 1900

"He knows how strong are the **inclinations** of the **natural heart**, and He will help in every time of temptation." Ellen G. White, *Messages to Young People* p. 67



*"He withstood the temptation, through the power **that man may command**. He laid hold on the throne of God, and there is not a man or woman who may not have access to **the same help** through faith in God. Man may become a partaker of the divine nature; not a soul lives who may not summon the aid of Heaven in temptation and trial. Christ came to reveal the source of His power, that man might never rely on his unaided human capabilities." Ellen G. White, Selected Messages, vol. 1, p. 408*

*"But Christ's humanity was united with divinity, and in this strength He would bear all the temptations that Satan could bring against Him, and yet keep His soul **untainted by sin**. And this power to overcome He would **give to every son and daughter of Adam** who would accept by faith the righteous attributes of His character." Ellen G. White, Selected Messages, vol. 1, p. 223*

*"The tempter's agency is not to be accounted **an excuse** for one wrong act. Satan is jubilant when he hears the professed followers of Christ **making excuses for their deformity of character**. It is these **excuses that lead to sin**. There is no excuse for sinning. A holy temper, a Christlike life, is accessible to every repenting, believing child of God." Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 311*

*"Christ is the ladder that Jacob saw, the base resting on the earth, and the topmost round reaching to the gate of heaven, to the very threshold of glory. If that ladder had failed by **a single step** of reaching the earth, we should have been lost. But Christ reaches us **where we are**. He took **our nature** and overcame, that we through taking His nature might overcome. Made "in the **likeness of sinful flesh**" (Romans 8:3), **He lived a sinless life**. Now by His divinity, He lays hold upon the throne of heaven, while by His humanity He reaches us. He bids us by faith in Him attain to the glory of the character of God. Therefore, are we to be perfect, even as our "Father which is in heaven is perfect." Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 311*

*"The Son of God was assaulted at every step by the powers of darkness. After His baptism, He was driven of the Spirit into the wilderness, and suffered temptation for forty days. Letters have been coming in to me, affirming that **Christ could not have had the same nature as man**, for if He had, **He would have fallen** under similar temptations. If He did not have **man's nature**, He could not be **our example**. If He was not a partaker of **our nature**, He could not have been **tempted as man** has been. If it were not possible for Him to yield to temptation, He could **not be our helper**. It was a solemn reality that Christ came to fight the*

battles **as man**, in man's behalf. His temptation and victory tell us that humanity must **copy the Pattern**; man must become a **partaker of the divine nature**." Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, vol. 1, p. 408

"The obedience of Christ to His Father was **the same obedience that is required of man**. Man cannot overcome Satan's temptations without **divine power to combine with his instrumentality**. So with Jesus Christ; He could lay hold of divine power. He came not to our world to give the obedience of a lesser God to a greater, but as a man to obey God's holy law, and in this way **He is our example**. The Lord Jesus came to our world, not to reveal what **a God could do**, but what **a man could do**, through faith in **God's power** to help in **every** emergency. Man is, through faith, to be a partaker in the divine nature, and to overcome every temptation wherewith he is beset. The Lord now demands that every son and daughter of Adam, through faith in Jesus Christ, serve Him in **human nature which we now have**. The Lord Jesus has bridged the gulf that sin has made. He has connected earth with heaven, and finite man with the infinite God. Jesus, the world's Redeemer, could only keep the commandments of God **in the same way that humanity can keep them** (Manuscript 1, 1892). *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 929

What love! What amazing condescension! The King of glory proposed to humble Himself to **fallen humanity**! He would place His feet in **Adam's steps**. He would **take man's fallen nature**, and engage to cope with the strong foe who triumphed over Adam. He would overcome Satan, and in thus doing He would open the way for the redemption from the disgrace of Adam's failure and fall, of all those who would believe on Him". Ellen G. White, *Confrontation*, p. 18

"Without the transforming process which can come alone through divine power, the **original propensities to sin** are left in the heart in **all their strength**, to forge **new chains**, to impose a slavery that can never be broken by **human power**...." Ellen G. White, *Reflecting Christ*, p. 303

## Conclusion

Ellen White makes clear that the final Generation will gain the victory over sin in sinful flesh:

"Sin could be resisted and overcome only through the mighty agency of the Third Person of the Godhead, who would come with no modified energy, but in the fullness of divine power. It is the Spirit that **makes effectual** what has been

wrought out by the world's Redeemer. It is by the Spirit that the **heart is made pure**. Through the Spirit the believer becomes a **partaker of the divine nature**. Christ has given His Spirit as a divine power to **overcome all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil**, and to impress His own character upon His church." Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 671

"Now, while our great High Priest is making the atonement for us, we should seek to become **perfect in Christ**. Not even **by a thought** could our Savior be brought **to yield** to the **power** of temptation. Satan finds **in human hearts** some point where he can gain a foothold; some **sinful desire is cherished**, by means of which his **temptations assert their power** [in other words, we respond to the pull of our evil propensities]. But Christ declared of Himself: "The prince of this world cometh, and hath **nothing in Me**." John 14:30. Satan could find **nothing in** the Son of God that would enable him to gain the victory. He had kept His Father's commandments, and there was **no sin in Him** that Satan could use to his advantage. **This is the condition** in which those must be found who shall stand in the **time of trouble**." Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 623





# **“LAST GENERATION THEOLOGY: ANTI-GOSPEL OR BIBLE TRUTH?”**

## **#3 – LOOKING UNTO JESUS**

**BY PASTOR STEPHEN BOHR**

### **Introduction**

You are driving down an icy country road in the dead of winter and your car begins to skid on the ice and you lose control. Which ditch would you rather slide into, the left ditch or the right ditch? Most likely you have no preference; you would rather stay on the road.

In the concluding presentation of this symposium we are going to discuss two theological ditches that take us off the spiritual road to salvation and how to stay on the road.

Ellen White vividly described the two ditches and the counterfeit theology that stands behind them:

*“A prayerful study of the Bible would show Protestants the real character of the papacy and would cause them to abhor and to shun it; but many are so wise in their own conceit that they feel no need of humbly seeking God that they may be led into the truth. Although priding themselves on their enlightenment, they are ignorant both of the Scriptures and of the power of God. They must have some means of quieting their consciences, and they seek that which is least spiritual and humiliating. What they desire is a method of forgetting God which shall pass as a method of remembering Him. The papacy is well adapted to meet the wants of all these. It is prepared for two classes of mankind, embracing nearly the whole world--those who would be [1] saved by their merits, and those who*

would be [2] saved **in their sins**. Here is the **secret of its power**." Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 572

## **The Right Ditch: Legalism**

The right ditch is **legalism**. The legalist has problems with the **internal motivation for doing good works**. He believes he can be saved by **his merits** and exalts the **law** above **grace**.

Pharisees have **three qualities**:

- ✓ They trust in their **own works** for salvation.
- ✓ They **compare** their righteousness with that of others.
- ✓ They love to be **praised** by men.

The best example of this attitude is the story of the **Pharisee and the Publican**.

### **Luke 18:9-14**

*"Also He spoke this parable to some who [trait #1] **trusted in themselves** that they were righteous, and **despised others** [trait #2]: <sup>10</sup> "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a **Pharisee** and the other a **tax collector**. <sup>11</sup> The Pharisee stood and prayed thus **with himself**, 'God, **I** thank You that **I** am not like **other men**—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as **this tax collector**. <sup>12</sup> **I** fast twice a week; **I** give tithes of all that **I** possess.' <sup>13</sup> And the tax collector, standing [1] **afar off**, would not so much as [2] **raise his eyes** to heaven, but [3] **beat his breast**, saying, [4] 'God, be **merciful to me a sinner**!' <sup>14</sup> I tell you, this man went down to his house **justified** rather than the other; for everyone who **exalts himself** will be humbled, and he who **humbles himself** will be exalted."*

However, there are **other** examples of the **right ditch**:

- ✓ The **rich young ruler** (**outwardly** he was seemingly a **commandment keeper** but lacked the **inward motivation** of love)
- ✓ The **elder son** (**obeyed** his father's commandments **to earn his favor**)

### **Luke 15:29**

*"So he answered and said to his father, 'Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I **never transgressed** your commandment **at any time**; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends.'"*

- ✓ The **vineyard workers** (we **worked more** and therefore we deserve a **greater reward**).
- ✓ **Matthew 6**: They gave **alms** and **prayed** in **public squares** with a **great show** of piety to be praised by men and **they got their reward**, the **praise of men**.
- ✓ **Matthew 23:23-28**: Describes the **disconnect** between the **inside** and the **outside**:

*"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin, and have neglected the **weightier matters** of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the **others undone**.<sup>24</sup> Blind guides, who **strain out a gnat [major in minors]** and **swallow a camel! [minor in majors]**<sup>25</sup> "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the **outside** of the cup and dish, but **inside** they are full of extortion and self-indulgence.<sup>26</sup> Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the **inside** of the cup and dish, that the **outside** of them may be clean also.<sup>27</sup> "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear **beautiful outwardly**, but **inside** are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness.<sup>28</sup> Even so you also **outwardly** appear righteous to men, but **inside** you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness."*

## **The Left Ditch: Excuse Sin: Trouble outside: Saved in our Sins**

The left ditch is **excusing sin**. These claim that the **inside** is right with the Lord but the **outside** contradicts their claim. They claim that they can be **saved in their sins** and they exalt grace **above the law**.

### **2 Timothy 3:1-5**

The apostle Paul gives a **long list of sins** that will exist in the **last days beginning** with 'lovers of their own selves' and ending with the 'lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God'. Those who practice these things have a **form of godliness** but lack the **power**.

**Ellen White** described these:

*"The picture which the apostle Paul has drawn of the **professed people** of God in the **last days** is a sad but faithful delineation of the **popular churches** of our*

time. "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof," "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God," "lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud," [2 Timothy 3:2-7]—such are a few specifications from the dark catalogue which he has given."

In another place, **Ellen White** quoted **1 Timothy 3:1-5** and then wrote:

*"This class will be developed among **us as a people** as well as **in the world**."*  
*Australasian Union Conference Record, September 30, 1912*

## **2 Timothy 4:2, 3**

*"For the time will come when they will not endure **sound doctrine**, but according to their **own desires**, because they have **itching ears**, they will **heap up** for themselves teachers; <sup>4</sup> and they will **turn their ears** away from the **truth**, and be turned aside to **fables**."*

*"By the **pride of human wisdom**, by contempt for the influence of the Holy Spirit, and by **disrelish for the truths of God's word**, many who **profess to be Christians**, and who feel competent to teach others, will be led to turn away from the requirements of God. Paul declared to Timothy, "The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."*

*The apostle **does not here refer** to the **openly irreligious**, but to the **professing Christians** who make **inclination their guide**, and thus become **enslaved by self**. Such are willing to listen to those doctrines only that **do not rebuke their sins** or condemn their **pleasure-loving course**. They are **offended** by the plain words of the faithful servants of Christ and choose teachers who **praise and flatter them**. And among **professing ministers** there are those who preach the **opinions of men** instead of the word of God. Unfaithful to their trust, they **lead astray** those who look to them for spiritual guidance." Ellen G. White, *Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 504, 505*

## **Matthew 7:21-23** (KJV) with **1 John 3:4**

*"Not every one that saith unto me, **Lord, Lord**, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that **doeth the will** of my Father which is in heaven. <sup>22</sup> Many will say to me in **that day**, **Lord, Lord**, have we not prophesied **in thy name**? and **in thy name** have cast out devils? and **in thy name** done many wonderful works? <sup>23</sup>*



*And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." [anomías, you who transgress the law]*

### **James 2:20-26**

One crucially important point we did not deal with in this symposium is the sin of **omission or neglect**.

*"But do you want to know, O foolish man, that **faith without works is dead**? <sup>21</sup> Was not Abraham our father **justified by works** when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? <sup>22</sup> Do you see that **faith was working together** with his works, and by **works faith was made perfect**? <sup>23</sup> And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And he was called the friend of God. <sup>24</sup> You see then that a man is **justified by works**, and not by **faith only**." <sup>25</sup> Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also **justified by works** when she received the messengers and sent them out another way? <sup>26</sup> For as the body without the spirit is dead, so **faith without works is dead** also."*

Neither **faithless works** nor a **workless faith** will save you but rather a **working faith**!

### **#3: Middle of the Road**

The **outside** and the **inside** are in **perfect harmony** because the **Holy Spirit** works inside to change the outside. The **rest of our study** together will expound upon this **harmony** that must exist between the inside and the outside.

### **The Depths of Sin**

The **fundamental problem** of those who believe they can be saved **by their works** and those who believe they can be saved **in their sins**, is that they **fail to understand** the **true nature of sin**. They see sin as **breaking a code** written on **tables of stone**. After all, this how the Bible defines sin, right?

### **1 John 3:4, KJV**

*"Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the **transgression of the law**."*

However, sin is far **deeper** than transgressing a **list of commandments written on tables of stone**. The law on tables of stone is a **written description**

**of who God is, of His character.** When we break the written code, we are really **sinning against God as a person** because the law is a written reflection of His person. (Review **the chart** comparing God with his Law).

## **Sin is Personal**

The Bible provides many examples of how sin is **not merely** breaking **a code** written on tables of stone but rather against God, whose character is **reflected in the code.**

- **Joseph** realized that **adultery** would be sin **against God**. He said to **Potiphar's wife**:

### **Genesis 39:9**

*"There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin **against God**?"*

- When the **plague of the locusts** was at its peak, **Pharaoh** exclaimed:

### **Exodus 10:16**

*"I have sinned against the **LORD God** and **against you**."*

- At the **golden calf** Israel broke the first and second commandments: "You shall have no other God's before me" and 'you shall not make any graven image' but their sin was **against the LORD**:

### **Exodus 32:33**

*"And the LORD said to Moses, "Whoever has sinned **against Me**, I will blot him out of My book."*

- **Achan** broke the commandments "You shall not **covet**" and "you shall not **steal**" but when he admitted his sin he stated:

### **Joshua 7:20**

*"And Achan answered Joshua and said, "Indeed I have sinned **against the LORD** God of Israel, and this is what I have done."*

- When **Nathan** confronted David with his sin of **adultery** and **murder**, **David** said:

## **2Samuel 12:13**

*"I have sinned **against the Lord.**"*

Yes, David broke the **written commandments**: "Thou shalt not commit adultery" and "thou shalt not kill" but he was actually sinning against a **living person** of whom the **law is a reflection**.

In his **penitential Psalm**, David cried out:

## **Psalm 51:4**

*"**Against You, You only**, have I sinned, and done this evil in **Your** sight--that **You** may be found just when **You** speak, and blameless when **You** judge."*

## **Daniel's penitential Prayer**

## **Daniel 9:10, 11**

*"We have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in **His laws**, which He set before us by His servants the prophets. <sup>11</sup> Yes, all Israel has transgressed **Your law**, and has departed so as not to obey **Your voice**; therefore the curse and the oath written in the Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out on us, because we have **sinned against Him.**"*

- **The Prodigal Son**

The prodigal broke the commandments, "Honor your father and your mother" and "you shall not commit adultery" but his sin really **hurt his father** and thus he said, "I have sinned against **heaven** and **against you.**"

In all these cases, yes, the people **broke a written code** but they **sinned against a person** whose character is **described** in the written code.

Instead of thinking of sin as the mere transgression of commandments written on tables of stone, think of sin as **transgression against Jesus** whose reflection is in the code. Then we are not only **unlike the law** but **unlike Jesus** who is the embodiment of the law. We will see that breaking the law results in breaking a **relationship** with our best friend.

**Stone** is **cold, inanimate, unfeeling** and **hard**. You cannot **offend** tables of stone. They **don't cry** when you break them. But Jesus does!

## Sin Breaks Relationships

### Isaiah 59:2

*“But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins [transgressions of the law] have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.”*

Sin means more than breaking a written code, it is **personal**; it **breaks relationships**.

This is what Paul meant when he wrote that genuine Christians do not serve in deadness of **letter** (the law as a mere code) but in **newness of spirit** (as a relationship to a person).

## The Incarnation of the Law

An **example** will help us comprehend the relationship between the law on tables of stone and Christ as a person. **Grand Teton National Park** lakes—it is difficult to distinguish the **original from the reflection**.

*“What speech is to thought, so is Christ to the invisible Father. He is the manifestation of the Father, and is called the Word of God. God sent His Son into the world, His divinity clothed with humanity, that man might bear the image of the invisible God. He made known in His words, His character, His power and majesty, the nature and attributes of God. Divinity flashed through humanity in softening, subduing light. He was the embodiment of the law of God, which is the transcript of His character.”* Manuscript 77, 1899 (SDABC, volume 5, 1131).

Embodiment means that Jesus **lived the law in His body**. That is to say, the law is a description of **Jesus is written form**. The life of Jesus is a living **demonstration** in human flesh of the principles of the law.

According to **Psalms 40:7, 8** Jesus **embodied** the law because the law written on tables of stone was written in His heart:

*“Then I said, ‘Behold, I come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me. 8 I delight to do Your will, O my God, and Your law is within my heart.’”*

## To crucify the law is to crucify Jesus

Some Christians say: ‘I **love Jesus**’ and almost in the same breath they say ‘the law was nailed to the cross’. However, to **crucify the law** means to **crucify**

**Jesus** because the law is a **reflection of Jesus**. Ellen White compared the great sin of the Jewish nation with the sin of the Christian world at the end of time:

*"Jesus, looking down to the last generation, saw the world involved in a deception **similar** to that which caused the destruction of Jerusalem. The great sin of the Jews was their [1] **rejection of Christ**; the great sin of the Christian world would be their [2] **rejection of the law** of God, the foundation of His government in heaven and earth." Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 22:*

The Jews claimed to believe in the **reflection** but rejected the **original**. Christians will **reject the reflection** and claim to **follow the original**.

It is impossible to **love Christ** and despise the law because the law is a reflection of **who He is**. Jesus was the **law in living color**.

## **Love and Hatred**

**Genuine** Christians experience **hatred and love** at the same time. **Love for the law and Jesus** and **hatred for sin** and transgression of the law because of what it did to Jesus.

Notice the words about Jesus in **Hebrews 1:9**

*"You have **loved** righteousness and **hated** lawlessness [**transgression of the law**]; therefore, God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your companions."*

Ellen White makes this rather startling statement:

*"Never before had there been a being upon the earth who **hated sin** with so **perfect a hatred** as did Christ. He had seen its deceiving, infatuating power upon the holy angels, and **all His powers were enlisted against it**." Ellen G. White, Selected Message, vol. 1, p. 254*

And yet she also says:

**This Day with God, p. 279:**

*"While He **hated sin** with a **perfect hatred**, He could **weep over the sinner**."*

## **Incentive for Holiness**

**Why** do genuine Christians hate sin and love the Savior? What motivates them to a life in **harmony** with the law? Fear of **punishment**? **Earning** salvation?

According to Leviticus 4 and 5 the sinner brought the victim to the sanctuary and confessed his sin upon the spotless victim's head. Thus, the sin was transferred from the sinner to the victim. This ceremony occurred while the victim was still alive.

Why the head? The head is the place where thinking, reasoning, feeling, choice occurs. Only after the sins were placed upon the head of the animal did the animal die!

## **In Gethsemane**

Now let's go to the Garden of Gethsemane to find the fulfillment of this ceremony. When we think of Jesus bearing our sins we usually think of the cross. But the sins were actually placed on Jesus while He was alive in the Garden before He died on the cross.

### **Matthew 26:38**

*"Then He said to them, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me."*

Notice that it was the sorrow of Jesus led to His death. In hard times we long for understanding and support from our friends. Jesus longed for this support but found none!

- ✓ The disciples slept while Jesus agonized.
- ✓ One of his inner circle betrayed Him.
- ✓ Later, Peter denied any association with Him using vulgar language.
- ✓ All the disciples fled and forsook Him.
- ✓ Isaiah 63:3: predicted that He would tread the winepress alone.  
*"He died outside the camp, where felons and murderers were executed. There He trod the winepress alone, bearing the penalty that should have fallen on the sinner." Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 7, p. 934*
- ✓ In the Garden it appeared that His own Father had forsaken Him.
- ✓ Satan tempted Him to think that His sacrifice would be fruitless and He would risk His own existence in the process.

## Drinking the Cup

**Matthew 26:39, 42, 44**: As the **disciples slept**, Jesus agonized over **drinking the cup**:

*"He went a little farther and fell on **His face**, and prayed, saying, [1] "O **My** Father, if it is possible, let **this cup** pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will." [2] <sup>42</sup> Again, a second time, He went away and prayed, saying, "O **My** Father, if **this cup** cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done." [3] <sup>44</sup> So He left them, went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the **same words**."*

The book of **Hebrews** describes His agony:

### **Hebrews 5:7, 8**

*"And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like **great drops of blood** falling down to the ground."*

*". . . who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up **prayers** and **supplications**, with vehement **cries** and **tears** to Him who was able to save Him from death, and **was heard** because of His godly fear."*

### **Luke 22:44: Sweat blood**

*"And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like **great drops of blood** falling down to the ground."*

**What was in the cup?** The wrath of His very **own Father**! The word for 'cup' is the same as is used in **Revelation 16:19** where God will pour out the cup of His wrath upon the lost.

**John 18:11: Who gave** Him the cup? His **own Father**!

*"So Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword into the sheath. Shall I not drink the cup which **My Father has given Me**?"*

### **Isaiah 53:6**

*"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and **the LORD has laid on Him** the iniquity of **us all**."*

Jesus feared He would be **eternally separated** from His Father:

*"Satan with his fierce temptations wrung the heart of Jesus. The Savior **could not see** through the portals of the tomb. Hope did not present to Him His coming forth from the grave a conqueror, or tell Him of the Father's acceptance of the sacrifice. He feared that sin was so offensive to God that Their **separation was to be eternal**. Christ **felt the anguish** that the sinner will feel when **mercy shall no longer plead** for the guilty race. It was the **sense of sin**, bringing the **Father's wrath** upon Him as **man's substitute** that made the cup He drank so bitter, and **broke the heart** of the Son of God." Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* p. 753*

## **Would have died in the Garden**

The **Mel Gibson** movie, *The Passion of the Christ* majored on the **physical beating** that Jesus received but Jesus would have **died in the Garden** before anyone **laid a finger** on him unless **an angel** was sent to strengthen Him:

*"Human nature would **then and there have died** under the **horror of the sense of sin**, had not an angel from heaven strengthened Him to bear the agony." *The Bible Training School*, September 1, 1915*

## **Forsaken On the Cross**

**John 8:29**: During His ministry Jesus claimed that the **Father was always with Him**:

*"And He who sent Me is **with Me**. The Father has **not left Me alone**, for I always do those things that please Him."*

**Matthew 27:46**: Now on the cross he **cannot feel** the presence of His Father and He cries out:

*"My God, My God, why have you **forsaken** Me?"*

**Ellen White** vividly describes the scene:

*"The guilt of **every sin** pressed its weight upon the divine soul of the world's Redeemer. The evil **thoughts**, the evil **words**, the evil **deeds** of **every son and daughter of Adam**, called for retribution upon Himself; for He had become **man's substitute**. Though the guilt of sin was not His, His spirit was torn and bruised by the transgressions of men, and He who knew no sin **became sin for us**, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." *Selected Messages*, volume 1, p. 321*



*“He died **outside** the camp, where **felons and murderers** were executed. There He trod the **winepress alone**, bearing **the penalty** that should have fallen on the sinner.” Ellen G. White, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 934*

### **Isaiah 53:4-6**

*“Surely He has borne **our griefs** and carried our **sorrows**; yet we esteemed Him **stricken**, **smitten** by God, and **afflicted**.<sup>5</sup> But He was **wounded** for **our** transgressions, He was **bruised** for **our** iniquities; the **chastisement** for **our** peace was upon Him, and by His **stripes we** are healed.<sup>6</sup> All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and **the LORD has laid** on Him the iniquity of **us all**.”*

**What caused** the agonizing experience of Jesus? **Sin**. **Gethsemane** and the **Cross** reveal that sin is a **monster**. It caused the suffering and death of Jesus! As we behold this, we will **hate sin** for what **it did** to Jesus but love the Savior for what **He did for us**.

### **Reaction when we Behold**

It is not when we behold the written law on **tables of stone** that we see the **horrendous nature** of sin and its **remedy**. It is by beholding **Jesus** in **Gethsemane and the Cross** that we understand the depths of sin and to hate it and to love Jesus.

When the prophet **Isaiah** caught a glimpse of the **holiness of God** (the Holy One of Israel is a favorite expression used over **30 times** in the book), he immediately discerned his **own unworthiness**:

### **Isaiah 6: 5**

*“Woe is me! For I am **undone**, because I am a man of **unclean lips**, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for **mine eyes** have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.”*

### **Luke 5:8**

Likewise, when **Peter** met Jesus on the **shore** of the sea of Galilee, he said:

*“Depart from me, for I am a **sinful man**, O Lord.”*

### **Exodus 3:6**

When **Moses** met God at the burning bush he:

***“hid his face,** for he was afraid to look upon God.”*

### **Romans 7:24**

The **apostle Paul** exclaimed:

*“For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) **nothing good dwells**; O wretched man that I am! **Who will deliver** me from this body of death?”*

### **Daniel 9:16**

Holy **Daniel** exclaimed:

*“**we** have sinned and committed iniquity, **we** have done wickedly and rebelled, even by departing from Your precepts and Your judgments.”*

This attitude will also be true of those who go through the **time of trouble**:

*“As Satan accuses the people of God on account of their sins, the Lord permits him to try them to the uttermost. Their confidence in God, their faith and firmness, will be severely tested. As they review the **past**, their hopes sink; for in their **whole lives** they can see little good. They are fully conscious of their **weakness and unworthiness**.” Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 618*

### **Justification more than Forensic**

After sinning, **Adam and Eve** felt **no sorrow** for sin. They did **feel sorry** about the **consequences** but not for the sin. **Adam blamed** Eve and God and **Eve blamed** the serpent and God. It was not until they understood that their sin would result in their **Creator suffering** the agony of Gethsemane and the Cross.

*“To Adam, the offering of the first sacrifice was a **most painful ceremony**. His hand must be raised to take life, which only God could give. It was the first time he had ever witnessed death, and he knew that had he been obedient to God, there would have been no death of man or beast. As he slew the innocent victim, he **trembled at the thought** that his sin **must shed the blood** of the spotless Lamb of God. This scene gave him a **deeper and more vivid sense** of the greatness of his transgression, which nothing but the death of God's dear Son could expiate. And **he marveled** at the infinite **goodness** that would give such a ransom to save the guilty. A **star of hope** illumined the dark and terrible future*

and relieved it of its utter desolation.” Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 68

Thus, by **looking at the cross**, Adam understood **two things**:

- ✓ First the **depth and greatness** of our transgression.
- ✓ Second the infinite **goodness of God** in giving us a way of escape. No doubt God’s forgiveness led him to hate sin and love the Savior.

### **An Illustration from practical life**

- ✓ I grew up in **Caracas, Venezuela**. There I finished my **elementary education** in Colegio Ricardo Greenidge.
- ✓ The school was on the **first floor** and my **father’s office** was on the second.
- ✓ During **recess** I would go to my **dad’s office** who was the Conference president.
- ✓ One day I found an **envelope** in the **trash bin** with **twenty Bolívares** (about seven dollars). I knew the envelope had been thrown away by mistake.
- ✓ However, I told myself: “**Finders keepers, losers weepers**”
- ✓ I **took the money** and gave **ten** to a **friend**. During recess we bought **candy, chips, gum, sodas**, etc.
- ✓ However, be sure your sin will **find you out**! We were taken to the **principal’s office** and finally I had to spill the beans!
- ✓ I had **broken** two of the **written commandments** ‘*thou shalt not steal*’ and ‘*thou shalt not covet*.’
- ✓ I was sorry I had been **caught** and I was sorry about the **punishment** I was going to get when I got home. For me the law at this point was merely **a code, a rule** I had broken that would lead to punishment.
- ✓ When **my mother** met at the door she had tears streaming down her cheeks.
- ✓ I would have taken **any number of lashes** if I could have prevented those tears.
- ✓ In the course of the years I have come to a realization that my sins **hurt Jesus** more. **He also shed tears**. I had **disappointed Him**.

## How to Hate Sin and Love Jesus

We do not overcome sin by **beholding the law on tables of stone** but rather by beholding what it did to Jesus and His **immense sacrifice**. Sin is not merely breaking the law but **breaking a heart**!

*"In one way only can a true knowledge of self be obtained. **We must behold Christ**. It is ignorance of Him that makes men so uplifted in their own righteousness. When we contemplate **His purity and excellence**, we shall see our own weakness and poverty and defects as they really are. We shall see ourselves lost and hopeless, clad in garments of self-righteousness, like every other sinner. We shall see that if we are ever saved, it will not be through our own goodness, but through **God's infinite grace**." Ellen G. White, *Christ Object Lessons*, p. 159*

Sin is overcome, not by **focusing on the law** but on Jesus. He died for those sinful thoughts at the **movie theater**, for the worldly **music** we enjoy, for the sinful **actions** we perform, for the **false words** that we speak and the **evil thoughts** and feelings that we entertain.

When we behold the absolute purity of Jesus and see **what sin did to Jesus** we will **love Jesus** and **hate sin**. The reason we **love sin so much** is because we are **so far from Jesus**! Sin is overcome by beholding **Gethsemane and the cross**!

### **Hebrews 12:1-3**

**Paul** gave us the secret of victory:

*"Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside **every weight**, and **the sin** which so **easily ensnares us**, and let us run with endurance **the race** that is set before us, <sup>2</sup> **looking** unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for **the joy** that was **set before Him** endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."*

*"**That joy** was to see **souls saved** by His humiliation, His agony, and the shedding of His blood." Ellen G. White, *The Sanctified Life*, p. 56*

*"By **beholding** Christ, by **talking** of Him, by **beholding** the loveliness of His character we become **changed**. Changed from glory to glory. And what is glory? Character—and he becomes **changed from character to character**. Thus we*

see that there is a work of purification that goes on by beholding Jesus.” Ellen G. White, Sons and Daughters of God, p. 337

## Two Images at the End

At the close of probation two groups of people will fully reflect two different images. One fully reflects the image of Satan. Notice this chilling statement from Ellen White:

*“The forces of darkness will unite with human agents who have given themselves into the control of Satan, and the same scenes that were exhibited at the trial, rejection, and crucifixion of Christ will be revived. Through yielding to satanic influences, men will be transformed into fiends [an evil spirit or demon; a wicked or cruel person]; and those who were created in the image of God, who were formed to honor and glorify their Creator, will become the habitation of dragons, and Satan will see in an apostate race his masterpiece of evil—men who reflect his own image.” The Review and Herald April 14, 1896*

The other will fully reflect the image of Jesus. Writing about those who will go through the final time of trouble, Ellen White wrote:

*“Their affliction is great; the flames of the furnace seem about to consume them; but the Refiner will bring them forth as gold tried in the fire. God's love for His children during the period of their severest trial is as strong and tender as in the days of their sunniest prosperity; but it is needful for them to be placed in the furnace of fire; their earthliness must be consumed, that the image of Christ may be perfectly reflected.” Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 621*

Ellen White once exclaimed:

*“At times, in contemplating heavenly things, my heart has been filled with a rapturous joy and love that is very precious, but that no words can describe. I love Jesus, I love his law; I want to be like Jesus, that I may reflect his image perfectly. I want to lie low at the foot of the cross, that I may be nothing, and Christ may be all in all.” The Review and Herald, April 29, 1884*

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